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Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Wednesday 19 October 2016

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Mercredi 19 octobre 2016

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly

Protecting Interns and Creating
a Learning Economy Act, 2016

Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

Loi de 2016 sur la protection
des stagiaires et la création
d'une économie d'apprentissage

Chair: Monte McNaughton
Clerk: Trevor Day

Président : Monte McNaughton
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLYCOMITÉ PERMANENT DE
L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE

Wednesday 19 October 2016

Mercredi 19 octobre 2016

*The committee met at 1300 in committee room 1.*PROTECTING INTERNS AND CREATING
A LEARNING ECONOMY ACT, 2016
LOI DE 2016 SUR LA PROTECTION
DES STAGIAIRES ET LA CRÉATION
D'UNE ÉCONOMIE D'APPRENTISSAGE

Consideration of the following bill:

Bill 64, An Act to amend the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act and the Employment Standards Act, 2000 / Projet de loi 64, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le ministère de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités et la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi.

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly. We're here for public hearings on Bill 64, An Act to amend the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act and the Employment Standards Act, 2000.

ONTARIO UNDERGRADUATE
STUDENT ALLIANCE

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): The first presenter will be the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance. Each presenter will have five minutes for their presentation, followed by three minutes of questioning from each party.

If you'd come forward, and if you could just introduce yourselves for Hansard by stating your names and then proceed with your five-minute presentation.

Mr. Zachary Rose: My name is Zachary Rose. I'm the executive director.

Mr. Jamie Cleary: I'm Jamie Cleary. I'm the president.

Again, good afternoon. My name is Jamie Cleary. I'm the president of the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance. To my right is Zachary Rose, the executive director. We would like to thank the committee for the opportunity to share our thoughts on Bill 64.

The Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, or OUSA, is a student-run advocacy organization that represents roughly 140,000 members of eight student associations across Ontario. Our current associations are the Alma Mater Society at Queen's, the Trent Durham Student Association, Wilfrid Laurier University Stu-

dents' Union, the Federation of Students at Waterloo, the Students' General Association at Laurentian, the Brock University Students' Union, the McMaster Students Union, and the University Students' Council at Western.

Driven by our membership, OUSA conducts research and develops policy recommendations on a number of issues that are important to students. Our overall mission is to improve the accessibility, affordability, accountability and quality of Ontario's universities.

Mr. Zachary Rose: We're here today to speak in favour of this bill, which our members believe would bring improvements to their university experiences.

Firstly, we think it is important to establish, as this bill does, a broad definition of work-integrated learning, or WIL. When discussing the creation of WIL opportunities, we often encounter confusion as to what these opportunities might look like, or we find a narrow focus on co-op. Establishing a broad, multi-faceted definition of work-integrated learning would give guidance to future discussions and allow for the emergence of different kinds of experiences that will be compatible with the many diverse universities in the province.

Given the recent recommendations from the Highly Skilled Workforce project regarding universal WIL, this kind of flexibility and variety will be critical.

Additionally, we strongly support the creation of the Advisory Council on Work-Integrated Learning. Increasing and enhancing WIL opportunities is a challenge that requires the collaboration of a number of different actors: government, universities, employers and students. A formal body that brings these voices together would yield the best, most holistic advice possible.

We suggest an addition to subsection 2(6)(d), which discusses the mandate of this council. Not only should the council make recommendations for increasing employers' awareness of the benefits of WIL, but the council should advise on ways to increase students' awareness of the same, so that students can make better, more informed choices about their learning paths.

The benefits of work-integrated learning for employment prospects and for skills development are well documented. Additionally, in a 2015 survey of our own membership, we asked students about their experiences with work-integrated learning. Our results showed that among OUSA students who had participated in WIL, 88% believed it had either improved or significantly improved their educational experience.

With this in mind, we believe it is time to take the steps that are outlined in schedule 1 of this bill in order to move the conversation forward and bring all the necessary stakeholders together.

Mr. Jamie Cleary: Additionally, we would like to address schedule 2 of the bill, which would amend the Employment Standards Act.

Currently, the ESA uses a particular definition of “employee” and bases its protections and rights on that definition. Students performing internships are explicitly excluded from this definition. The intention of this was to differentiate between jobs that fall under a regular-notion employment, and internships and other positions that are primarily educational in nature. Among other things, this distinction permits the practice of unpaid internships. However, wages are not the only important protection offered by the ESA and so not the only issue at hand.

The current exemption of students performing internships excludes them from a number of other rights and protections that ought to apply to everyone. Section 2 of Bill 64 would address this by introducing amendments to the act that would extend certain rights to individuals performing work under a program approved by a college or university. Specifically, it would grant basic protections to student interns when it comes to regulating working hours, ensuring breaks to eat during the day, providing the ability to take unpaid time off, and other employment standards.

Our members, when they are working internships, paid or unpaid, deserve the same basic protections in the workplace as regular employees.

In summary, students believe that Bill 64 would create improvements in their university experience. Establishing a broad and flexible definition of work-integrated learning and establishing an advisory committee that includes the student voice will let us create rich, new experiences on every campus. Amending the Employment Standards Act to remove the blanket exemption on interns will extend important rights to students in the workplace. We hope the committee will take these student perspectives to heart, and thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): Thank you very much. We’ll begin with Mr. Coe from the official opposition.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you very much for your presentation. I’m the official opposition critic for advanced education and skills development. We’ve met previously.

Your presentation you just made: Have you provided copies of that to the Clerk?

Mr. Zachary Rose: No, but we certainly can.

Mr. Lorne Coe: I would encourage you to do so, because it gives us an opportunity to go through it again and probe some additional questions overall.

I wanted to turn for a moment to the council on work-integrated learning. You’ve read that within the bill and I heard your comments that you’re predisposed to the content of the bill, subject to some of the amendments you suggested, which I want to read a little bit more thoroughly.

Notwithstanding, where do you see the opportunities for you to participate within that council?

Mr. Zachary Rose: Where do we see the opportunity?

Mr. Lorne Coe: Yes.

Mr. Zachary Rose: We would certainly like to appoint one of our student leaders. Presumably, the president would have an ex officio seat on the council so that, as the years would go by and our leadership would continue to change, we would have that stable position with the council to provide our students’ perspective.

Mr. Lorne Coe: All right. Are there ways that the council, in your estimation, as it’s described in the bill, could be improved over and above what you just responded, and if so, in what ways?

Mr. Zachary Rose: I’m not sure. We would need to see how it would function in practice. As it appears on paper, a very broad representation would be its key strength, and I would feel pretty optimistic about that.

Mr. Jamie Cleary: Yes. I would just add that I think one of the biggest strengths is the emphasis on student representation on the committee. I think that would be very important for us, that we ourselves would have a seat, most likely taken by the president of OUSA, but also that there are a variety of different students who bring different experiences to the committee.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you, Chair.

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): Mr. Bailey?

Mr. Robert Bailey: No questions.

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): All right. We’ll move to Ms. Sattler from the third party.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you so much for your presentation on the bill and for your involvement in the development of the bill and your earlier input on the first iteration of the bill. All of this is very much appreciated.

You mentioned that 88% of the students you surveyed at OUSA spoke very highly of their experience in work-integrated learning, but one of the motivations for this bill was from students who did not have good experiences. The work that they were asked to do on a placement was mundane or it didn’t really contribute to advancing their learning. I wondered if you have any stories or experiences to share. You obviously heard a lot of support from students for the experiences they had participated in, but have you heard the other side as well?

Mr. Zachary Rose: We have. I can say anecdotally for the moment that we have a report that will be coming out on this shortly, and it may have more specific examples, but anecdotally, we have heard instances of internships that either were lacking the reflection piece that’s addressed in the bill that is critical for the skills development aspect of it, as well as opportunities where the work they’re expected to do isn’t necessarily the most developmental; it’s more grabbing coffee, that sort of thing. Those stories are certainly out there.

I think what our research shows us is, there’s still quite a bit of enthusiasm and eagerness on students’ part for work-integrated learning. But we certainly have heard

the other side of the story, where not every experience is as good as it should be.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Okay. The other question I wanted to ask about your research, and also a driving force behind the bill, was around the value of WIL and helping students enter the labour market after they graduate. I wondered if you had any comments about work-integrated learning programs and transition to the workforce for students.

Mr. Zachary Rose: We certainly do. We don't have much by the way of statistics that kind of paint the picture of that transition, but we do have some idea of what we're hearing from our students in terms of how the transition is made and how the improvement works. The most obvious piece, of course, is that you work for a company as an intern and, hopefully, they'll take you on or they'll give you a job in the future. As well, there's the work experience that it gives you that you can put on your resumé.

The piece that we think is very valuable that is being a little understated at the moment is the extent to which a positive work-integrated learning experience shows the student what they've learned. It helps them recognize their own skills. It teaches them how to articulate their own skills so that when they're searching in the job market and finding a career, they have a better idea of what their learning means in the labour force.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Oh, that's very interesting.

Mr. Jamie Cleary: Yes. If I can add to that, I think one of the biggest things that we see from work-integrated learning is the skills articulation that comes out of these experiences. Anecdotally, I can provide—while not necessarily a definition of work-integrated learning in this bill, in my fourth year I was able to do a capstone research thesis in a lung cancer facility—

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): I'm sorry to cut you off. We have to move to the government now. Mr. Anderson.

Mr. Granville Anderson: Jamie and Zachary, thank you for coming, and thank you for the work you do on behalf of the students who you represent. You wanted to finish that thought?

Mr. Jamie Cleary: Yes, I was just going to add that work-integrated learning itself is very important to our students because of the skills that you're able to take out of those experiences—and actually apply your knowledge outside of the classroom, or even within the classroom of work-integrated learning there.

I just want to also address that the 88% that we see is due to, I think, the broad definition that we give to work-integrated learning as well, in that we weren't surveying students specifically on internships and their satisfaction with those. It's solely representative of our broad definition of work-integrated learning and student satisfaction with the idea of work-integrated learning in general.

Mr. Granville Anderson: Okay, thank you. I take it that you did participate in the Changing Workplaces Review consultation. I believe you did—

Mr. Zachary Rose: Yes.

Mr. Granville Anderson: That's based on your submissions. Could you tell us a bit more about your submissions?

Mr. Zachary Rose: Sure. It's largely a lot of the same content that we went over just now briefly: amending the ESA to extend protections to students who are there on internships or who are otherwise there as part of an educational program.

For us, the crux of it is to try to disentangle the issue of protections such as regulating the hours of work per day or unpaid time off or guaranteed time to eat during the day from the issue of paid versus unpaid internships. We think the former are far less controversial and should be dealt with first. We've encountered that sometimes it's all bundled together as an all-or-nothing kind of discussion. Our submission to the ESA really focused on separating those two issues to address the one more easily.

Mr. Granville Anderson: Okay. You probably know that last year, the Premier convened an expert panel on the highly skilled workforce to give us advice on how Ontario's workforce can prepare for more technology. Do you think that's a positive step? What advice would you give the people shaping those programs and opportunities?

Mr. Zachary Rose: Yes, we had the opportunity. We were very grateful to meet several times with the expert panel, and we saw quite a bit of our input reflected in the final report, which we thought was terrific.

One piece of advice that I gave then and I would continue to give is that, as these discussions are taking place and as committees are struck to explore how these steps are going to be taken, to ensure that student representation is always there. At the end of the day, what we're talking about is improving the student experience and improving outcomes for students so that they can contribute to the economy of the future, and I think it's very important that we make sure that we're always hearing from students and getting a first-hand account of what their experiences are.

Mr. Granville Anderson: Okay, thank you. I don't have any further questions.

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): Great. Thank you very much for your presentation today.

Mr. Zachary Rose: Thank you.

ONTARIO FEDERATION OF LABOUR

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): We'll now call upon the Ontario Federation of Labour.

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): Okay, we'll take a brief recess. We'd ask the members to stay close by while we find our next delegation.

The committee recessed from 1314 to 1319.

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): We'll call the meeting back to order. We'll call up the Ontario Federation of Labour for their five-minute presentation, followed by three minutes from each party, beginning

with the third party. If you could just state your name for Hansard and then begin with your presentation.

Mr. Ahmad Gaied: My name is Ahmad Gaied, and I am the executive vice-president of the Ontario Federation of Labour. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak here today on Bill 64. Also joining me today is Thevaki Thevaratnam, who is our director of research and education at the OFL.

The OFL represents approximately 54 unions and one million workers here in the province. We advocate on behalf of all working people. Part of this advocacy involves pushing for better working conditions, for more permanent full-time work with good wages and benefits and for greater access to joining and keeping a union.

We need to create a legislative framework for decent work in Ontario. To do this, we need government and the opposition parties to recognize their part in this.

Students who have graduated from a post-secondary institution understandably want to find a job that relates to the field that they spent years studying. For those that are able to secure a job, most find themselves in something akin to a survival job. More often than not, these jobs are temporary, meaning that they tend to pay lower wages, offer fewer workplace benefits and are less likely to offer on-the-job training and are more precarious in nature.

The mismatch between labour supply and demand and the underinvestment in workplace training contribute to graduate unemployment and underemployment. Many Ontarians are having a hard time finding work, while many employers are unable to find workers with the right qualifications. According to a 2013 Conference Board of Canada report, this gap is costing Ontario more than \$24 billion in lost economic activity.

Also, because of increasing mobility in today's workforce, where people move from job to job, businesses are demanding that new hires already have the necessary skills or obtain them elsewhere.

As we've seen, in the absence of traditional workplace training, the onus to teach job skills has fallen more and more to our colleges and universities. To ensure that students are able to successfully transition from school to the workplace, learning should extend beyond the classroom.

As MPP Sattler recognizes in her bill, there is tremendous value in ensuring that post-secondary students are able to participate in at least one experiential learning opportunity before they graduate. For students, this allows them to determine their fit with a potential career while gaining practical work experience to enhance their employability. For employers, it's an opportunity to up-skill the workforce and screen potential new hires.

Bill 64 rightly identifies the need for labour market partners and actors—including government, educators, business and labour—to work together. It establishes an advisory council that will provide recommendations on how to effectively increase the number and quality of work-integrated learning opportunities in Ontario. The OFL would welcome an opportunity to participate on this council.

In fact, as noted in our submission to the Premier's Highly Skilled Workforce Expert Panel, the OFL advocates for a permanent labour market partners forum to provide policy recommendations on a broad range of labour market development issues and opportunities, including employment strategies and training. The forum also allows for the creation of working groups to deliver on specific issues, such as work-integrated learning.

Bill 64 also addresses the fact that students who perform work as part of a university or college placement, as well as interns/trainees who are referred to as "persons receiving training," are among those excluded from the Employment Standards Act. This act is meant to establish the minimum employment standards and protections for workers across the province.

Because of this broad definition in the ESA exemptions, many employers have tweaked their internship programs to ensure that they only hire interns who are working as part of a post-secondary education placement. There is also a growing trend towards employers characterizing their unpaid workers as volunteers or volunteer interns.

In this way, employers are able to avoid the direct financial costs of ESA compliance, including vacation, public holiday and overtime pay—not to mention paying these workers anything at all.

The OFL believes that opportunities for practical training should be provided under the legal protection of the ESA. Regardless of a person's employment status or their age, there is a value attached to their work. Their time, their effort, their skill and their responsibility must be respected and valued in the labour market. People should therefore be paid for their work, even while being trained.

We would like to thank the member from London West for introducing this very important bill, and we hope that, based on the value of this bill and its potential to create a more prosperous and fairer economy, it will receive all-party support and pass through the legislative process quickly.

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): Great. Thank you very much.

Ms. Sattler.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you very much for that presentation and for your support of this bill.

With regard to the exploitation of unpaid internships, which is where you ended your presentation, the government's current approach has been to conduct these enforcement blitzes with a very small number of employers in a targeted sector in a limited geographic region. Do you think that is enough? In your perspective, how effective has this been in ending the exploitation of unpaid interns in our labour market?

Mr. Ahmad Gaied: While I do believe that it has been effective to some extent, the Ministry of Labour obviously has very limited resources. It needs to be expanded more fully, but it's also—I guess you could call it a Band-Aid solution. It's a short-term solution. It's good to have these blitzes to make sure that employers

are following the rules. However, it is a short-term solution.

I do believe that more needs to be done in terms of protecting workers in this province. Work is work. Whether you're an intern, a co-op student or a full-time employee, if you're performing work you should be covered under the ESA, and just providing these blitzes would be a short-term solution.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: So you feel that the protections that are set out in schedule 2 would be effective in helping reduce the proliferation of unpaid internships that we've seen in the province?

Mr. Ahmad Gaied: I'm going to refer to Thevaki for that answer.

Ms. Thevaki Thevaratnam: Those provisions in section 2 are very helpful, but for us, we want to see the exemption of interns and trainees under the ESA completely revoked. We believe they should be fully integrated into the ESA.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Okay. The other question I had is about the establishment of the minister's advisory council and the implementation of work-integrated learning. You mentioned that the OFL would like to sit as part of that table. What would the OFL bring specifically to that discussion that would happen at the advisory council?

Mr. Ahmad Gaied: We could offer our perspective. We represent many workers in this province. We have a campaign going on right now that I'm sure many of you have heard of, the Make It Fair campaign. Essentially, we are trying to standardize the rules in the province. We want all workers to be protected. We capture some of these internships, the students who are entering the workforce. We are advocating on their behalf, as well—

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): Thank you very much. Sorry. We have to move to the government and Mr. Dhillon.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Thank you, Mr. Gaied and Ms. Thevaratnam, for being here and for your presentation. You guys were here on your lobby day recently, and I know that your organization participated in the Changing Workplaces Review. Could you speak a bit more about some of the changes you would like to see for interns?

Ms. Thevaki Thevaratnam: Sure. Like I said to MPP Sattler, for us, in terms of interns, I think the very foundation and the most important thing to do is to ensure that they are included in the Employment Standards Act, because as we know, those are the minimum standards. That is the basic floor for protections for all working people in Ontario, and there are a number of exemptions currently—85, to be exact.

I think only about 25% of the working population in Ontario is completely covered by the ESA. That means 75% of working people have some sort of exclusion from it. And to be fair, given that this is the governing framework, the precedents and the foundation for working conditions in the province, unless we can broaden that and include the maximum number of people, it really isn't effective as it stands.

So for us, we would like to see interns being brought into the ESA. We'd also like to see enforcement provisions strengthened, because when you have weak enforcement provisions, that allows businesses to see it as a price to pay to violate the ESA. It weakens public confidence in the law. It doesn't give much confidence in the governing law, so we need to increase enforcement provisions. We've seen with the blitzes from 2014 to 2015 that there has been a decrease in the number of employers that have been seen as contravening the ESA in terms of internships. That's a positive trend and that needs to continue. Proactive blitzes are helpful and, like Ahmad said, that's a short-term solution, but it is part of the solution and we need to see more enforcement provisions.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: As you probably know, last year the Premier convened an expert panel on a highly skilled workforce to give us advice on how Ontario's workforce can prepare for a more technology- and knowledge-based economy.

1330

In June, the Premier and the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development accepted all of the expert panel's recommendations. One recommendation is to give each secondary and each post-secondary student an experiential learning opportunity while in school. Do you think this is a positive step forward? What advice would you give to the people shaping those programs and opportunities?

Ms. Thevaki Thevaratnam: I think it's a very positive step forward, and it aligns very much with MPP Sattler's bill that—

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): Thank you very much. We have to move now to the official opposition. Mr. Bailey.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you for coming today and for your presentation. I wanted to start with—there was a part in there that talked about menial work, that I read in your presentation—work is work. Can you explain what improvements you could see that could do away with—maybe not do away with, but could improve aspects of what is called menial work?

Mr. Ahmad Gaied: I think all work is important, first of all, but I feel like employers, especially because there is no assigned wage to the work that, for example, interns do, the work that they end up getting assigned does not provide them with a very positive experience. When you pay for something, the value of that work will most likely change. It would provide a better experience, a better opportunity for that student to gain meaningful experience, which they can then take with them to a potential employer, or maybe even with that employer.

Aside from that, if you're provided just these small opportunities, doing photocopying duties, pushing paper, things like that, if you're given these small tasks, the only take-away for that student is to say, "Hey, I can probably get a reference letter that said I showed up to work on time. I didn't really gain anything meaningful in terms of my experience or skills."

Mr. Robert Bailey: The second part of that question—

Mr. Ahmad Gaied: Sorry, we're just going to supplement that for a second.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Oh, okay.

Ms. Thevaki Thevaratnam: I would just add that Bill 64 allows that to happen through the council that it establishes. One of its mandates is to increase the quality of work-integrated learning in Ontario. That's how this bill accomplishes that.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Okay, good. Lorne?

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): Mr. Coe.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Concerning work-integrated learning programs, Bill 64 calls for the creation of a website for sharing information about available opportunities. How well do you think that's going to work? A website that is intended to help make it easier for businesses to participate in work-integrated learning programs: Do you think that's going to be effective or would you suggest other communications methods over and above what's reflected in the bill, coming out of your experience with the forum that you participated in?

Mr. Ahmad Gaied: I always hear that we're looking to build a workforce of the 21st century. I think the website would be a fantastic resource that employers can use in terms of finding the resources necessary where you can network and you can find the best skilled people possible—

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): I'm sorry to interrupt. Thank you very much for your presentation today. We're on a tight time frame.

Mr. Ahmad Gaied: Not a problem. Thank you.

URBAN WORKER PROJECT

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): We'll now call the Urban Worker Project to come forward, please. You have five minutes for your presentation, and the first set of questions will go to the government. If you could please state your name for Hansard, and begin.

Mr. Andrew Cash: Good afternoon. My name is Andrew Cash. I am the co-founder of the Urban Worker Project, which is a national initiative to raise the issues and the voices of those who are working freelance, those working as contractors, those who are what we call today solopreneurs and those who are working multiple part-time jobs, including those who are working in today's economy for free.

Prior to co-founding the Urban Worker Project, I was a member of Parliament for the riding of Davenport and, in that capacity, tabled legislation called the Intern Protection Act, which sought to tighten the rules for interns and internship programs in federally regulated industries across the country. So this issue is very close to me, and it's close to many people, including many parents across the country and in this province who see their young people, their children, incurring fairly large-scale student debt and then going out into the workforce and finding themselves not just doing one unpaid internship but

locked in a cycle of unpaid internships for which there is no protection from abuse, for which there is no safe arbiter that an unpaid intern can go to in order to raise concerns. In fact, it's a bit of a Wild West out there, in terms of internships.

I'm very happy to be here today to support this bill. Before I say why, I'd just like to preface all of this by saying that young people, students, should get paid and have access to quality internship programs. This is not an either/or scenario. To the extent that we need steps to get there, this bill represents a very important first one for Ontario.

Currently, in the landscape, employers don't quite know what their obligations are, and interns don't know what their rights are. To the extent that this bill helps to begin to clarify that for both sides, if you will, this is very, very important.

You have uneven enforcement. What happens when we have uneven enforcement of these rules? You have one employer who wants to do the right thing—he wants to bring interns into his or her shop—but sees the competitor down the street availing themselves of free labour, essentially. Then that employer who wants to do the right thing—what's he or she going to do?

It's tough to compete against “free.” This is why we need tighter rules. This is why we need to move towards a focus on paid internships, and this is one of the many reasons why I support this bill.

We need to improve regulations and oversight. The expansion of the definition under the act to include more interns is a good step. I would echo our friends the witnesses before me, that, really, if I look in this committee room, and if you all think about your youth and think about all of the unpaid part-time jobs you did, you'd probably have a hard time coming up with many. That's not the case for young people today.

It's incumbent, I think, upon legislators at all levels of government right across this country to take this issue with the seriousness with which the member for London West has taken this and say that we are at a pivotal point in our economy and we are at a pivotal point with regard to how we deal with things like intergenerational inequity and the vast, vast discrepancy with regard to income inequality in general.

In a broader sense, I think this bill is very important as we, all of us, try to tackle what I would argue is the issue of our times.

I think I'll stop there.

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): You're right on time. You've done this before.

We'll move to the government and Ms. Kiwala. Sorry. Mr. Dhillon.

Interjections.

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): One of you.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: You go ahead.

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): Mr. Dhillon.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Did you participate at all in the Changing Workplaces Review consultations? If you did, could you tell us a bit about your submission? If not,

could you please elaborate on some of the changes that you wish to see for interns and other related positions?

1340

Mr. Andrew Cash: Yes. The Urban Worker Project did provide a submission, a response to the interim report in which we echoed many of the concerns and the asks that many of our allies in civil society have presented, but our focus was particularly on the issue of contract workers and the extension of rights under the act to contract workers.

With regard to internships in general, I think—and you've heard from many witnesses already who have spoken to this—there is a real paucity in oversight, not just on the employer side but on the post-secondary education side as well. We heard this anecdotally through the Urban Worker Project and also, prior to that, through my work as a member of Parliament. We have stories of young people who are actually being harassed at their workplace and told, "Look, if you don't do this, I'm not going to sign off on your practicum." They have no recourse; they have nowhere to go. They feel they can't go back to their prof or to their instructor, and they certainly can't find a 1-800 number to call.

Again, back to the bill, issues like enabling anonymous reporting and third-party reporting of perceived abrogations of the act, I think those are important. How that plays out and what the details of that are, I think, are also important, and important for this committee to wrestle with.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Last year, the Premier convened an expert panel on a highly skilled workforce to give us advice on how Ontario's workforce can prepare for a more technology- and knowledge-based economy. In June, the Premier and the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development accepted all of the expert panel's—

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): You've got 20 seconds.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Do you think this is a positive step forward?

Mr. Andrew Cash: The consultation or the results?

Mr. Vic Dhillon: The results.

Mr. Andrew Cash: What I'd like to say about that generally—because I don't know all the details of the results. If we start with the premise that people should get paid for the work they do, and that we move the markers forward with that as one of our guiding principles, then a lot of issues around—

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): Sorry; we're going to move to the official opposition and Mr. Coe now.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you for your presentation. It focused predominantly on schedule 2 of the proposed legislation, and I would like to take us back to schedule 1, which talks about the college and university work-integrated program. Did you have any opinion on that part of the bill? If so, do you favour it, or do you see amendments that would strengthen it?

Mr. Andrew Cash: Clearly, when you look at the advisory council, if you will, that council will have to play a key role. The strength of that council, I think, is going to determine the strength of the bill going forward.

Certainly, there has to be better coordination—there's no question about it—between the post-secondary educational institutions, employers, government and students, frankly. I do believe, really, students need to be at the table when we make these decisions and have these discussions because, don't forget, it's students who shoulder massive student debts. Within the context of those debts, they're out there doing unpaid work, oftentimes for private interests.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Having said that, sir, your view then would be that the provincial advisory council would be more effective than the labour market partners' forums that the Ontario Federation of Labour cited in their comments?

Mr. Andrew Cash: No, it's not an either/or scenario. I think that both are vitally important.

Mr. Lorne Coe: The forum itself brought forward policy recommendations, including employment strategies and training. The provincial advisory council will be bringing forward similar types of recommendations. My question was, do you see any difference at all?

Mr. Andrew Cash: Yes. Look, it's like saying that if one person says one thing and another person says one thing, but they happen to be saying the same thing, does that negate one voice and elevate the other? I think that, with this issue, clearly we need a lot of voices at the table who are going to speak to these issues, and I see no real conflict there.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you for your response. To Mr. Bailey, please.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Do I have a minute?

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): Mr. Bailey, you have 10 seconds.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I've asked a couple of the other presenters about the provision of menial work—work that maybe somebody would view of no consequence. A couple of the other people said—and I agree—that to do work of any kind is good experience. Do you think that it's addressed well enough in the bill, that there's some way of moving forward—

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): And with that—sorry, Mr. Bailey—we have to move to Ms. Sattler.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you very much, Andrew, for being here today. I also wanted to thank you for your advocacy and the work that you did when you were a federal member of Parliament on the issue of intern protections, because certainly I drew on many of the initiatives that you were involved in when I was working on this bill.

I wondered if you could talk a little bit about lessons for Ontario based on the federal experience when there was legislation on intern protections that were brought in. The result was mixed, really, about how effective those protections were. Based on what's in schedule 2 of this bill, are there observations or cautions that you would

raise as we look at how to better protect and end the exploitation of unpaid interns?

Mr. Andrew Cash: I think that—and others have said this—the enforcement of these standards is vitally important. When you have a situation where employers—especially since 2008, we're in this scenario where they could just avail themselves of free labour. I would like to add that this is happening in the public sector, it's happening in governments and it's happening in Legislatures and the House of Commons in Ottawa.

I think that what we need to do is start setting standards. The public sector is a good place to start, and I think that enforcement, more evenly administered, is also a good place to start.

You've addressed some of this in your bill, and I think those are important things. I think that the flash visits to employers that happened, which the Ontario government exercised, are important, but they're problematic because they are viewed as an episode. They don't suggest a thorough commitment to making the economy fairer for more and more—particularly—young people.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Right. One of the challenges when I was working on this bill—and it has been noted by other researchers—is the lack of actual data, hard data, on the extent of unpaid internships in the province. Do you have any comments on that, or do you have more research based on your own experience with the Urban Worker Project as to what proportion of our young people are working for free—or not even just young people, but what proportion of our labour force is involved in illegal free labour?

Mr. Andrew Cash: Part of the troubling landscape that we find ourselves in right now is that we don't have clear numbers. I draw people's attention to the latest StatsCan—

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): Mr. Cash, sorry; that's all the time we have today. Thank you very much for attending.

Mr. Andrew Cash: Thank you.

COLLEGES ONTARIO

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): We now call forward Colleges Ontario. I remind members that if you want to keep your questions shorter, it might allow the presenter more time to answer.

If you could state your name for Hansard. You have five minutes for your presentation. This line of questioning will start with the official opposition.

Ms. Linda Franklin: Sure. Linda Franklin. I'm the president and CEO of Colleges Ontario. Thank you very much for the opportunity to comment today on behalf of colleges. This is certainly an important issue, and it's a timely one.

We are seeing more and more employers tell us that they need their workers to hit the ground running as soon as they graduate and come to them. That is absolutely an argument for more experiential learning and internship training while students are in school so that they can do

that going out into the workforce. Colleges do try to keep a close eye on the internships and experiential learning that they send students on, but having more tools to do this well would certainly be welcome.

1350

More than ever, students and parents are looking to us to do this. We've seen, as you know, a gradual reduction in employers doing training. When we poll parents and students now and we ask them what the main focus or job of post-secondary education is, uniformly they say, "To get a good job." It didn't used to be that; it is now. Again, the marriage of that need with employers telling us they need workers who are job-ready is speaking to more and more experiential learning. So it's a good time to be looking at this.

This isn't, as you'll know, new work to colleges. This was part of our mandate. We work with program advisory committees. We try to embed in many of our programs experiential learning. Just before we came here today, we did a bit of a poll of colleges. Many of them are up to about 80% of their programs having some kind of experiential learning. To your point, Mr. Bailey, we try to make it meaningful rather than menial experiential learning, but that is an important distinction if we're going to be training the workforce of tomorrow.

In apprenticeships, of course, workplace experiences are central to the program, embedded in it, and very well defined and articulated. That's not entirely true when you look at other experiential learning.

Colleges also offer co-op placements in all sorts of disciplines: architecture, technology, civil engineering, fashion design, paralegal—you name it. We have experiential learning in many of these programs.

In addition to what we're doing on the ground, embedded in our programs, the more recent development of college-applied learning through applied research is also providing new experiential learning opportunities. By the opportunity to work with business to solve real-world issues, students are gaining a lot of experiential learning. This kind of hands-on research experience also leads to new economic growth and new jobs, so it has value in relation to that as well as the student experience.

Providing meaningful workplace experience for students is really central to what we do, as I've said, and we're committed to working with the government and employers to ensure that even greater numbers of students get access to workplace experiences that prepare them for long-term success, not just workplace experiences for their own sake.

We like this bill for many of those reasons. We have a couple of specific suggestions that you may want to think about.

Section 3.1(6) of the bill says that the advisory council would be mandated to increase paid placement opportunities. I think this is an important goal and a worthy one, but we also have to pay attention a little bit to the potential for unintended consequences. We know that in some employment areas right now there is a view, a belief, and perhaps a reality that the capacity to pay

interns is limited, particularly in not-for-profit organizations. I think we just have to pay attention to that. I think we wouldn't want to have students in particular areas of the economy unable to gain workplace experience—just a suggestion there as something to think about.

In the part of the bill that talks about financial incentives to encourage employers, we think that's a very valuable and important tool to help more employers come to the table. Options should be looked at like tax incentives and financial subsidies. We should certainly think particularly about small and mid-sized companies who, if they have the capacity to bring in an intern, often provide the best and broadest range of experience because they have so few staff and so you have a greater opportunity. Their ability to bring in interns is often limited, so particular supports for them would be helpful.

In the same section, there's a provision for the council to make recommendations about the design of a website to share information about work-integrated learning. We think opportunities to have information on the web are very vital, but, just to relay an anecdote, we've had two meetings now with guidance counsellors, ministry officials, OCOT, our application service and student groups to talk about getting better information in the hands of guidance counsellors. They always say to us, "We are inundated with information. We don't have information that is contextualized, that is clear, that is readily accessible and in one place." I think before we add another website to our panoply of websites, it would behoove us to see if we couldn't address, in some way, this—

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): Thank you very much. We're out of time. We're going to move to Mr. Bailey.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you, Ms. Franklin and Ms. Holmes, for being here today and for your presentation. Could you elaborate a little more—I was going to ask you the question, but you got to it anyway—about section 3.1(6) and your concerns about maybe a lack of opportunities if payment was brought in?

Ms. Linda Franklin: It's a challenging subject to talk about. You'll remember a little while ago, when this issue first came into the media, one of the groups that came and spoke up about this were magazine publishers, who said, "Look, we would love to pay our interns. It's clearly impossible for us to do that. It would mean no meaningful internships across the magazine industry," which created a big debate around—well, is your business model all that sound and stable if you can't afford to pay people you have working for you?

But I think there is a reality that in some sectors of our economy, there are big challenges in finding ways to bring in people for internships and pay for them. In some cases, if an organization was prepared to offer meaningful, important opportunities for education and experience that the student gained a great deal of experience from and that was actually relevant to the workplace, there's a value there that I think we wouldn't want to lose.

Not that we would ever argue that interns shouldn't be paid, but in cases where this might be very challenging in

particular sectors, we wouldn't want to lose the opportunity for the kind of experience employers are telling us is critical if there's not an opportunity to pay them. In some cases, some of the thoughts around incentives and tax breaks might help with some of that.

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): Mr. Coe.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you for being here and for your presentation. It's very much what I heard during the summer, visiting campuses—universities and colleges—across the province.

My question is focusing on the provincial advisory council. How confident are you that the recommendations coming out of that council, as they're framed here in schedule 1, would first of all be considered and implemented, given your experience and advocacy over the years on this topic? This topic is not new.

Ms. Linda Franklin: No.

Mr. Lorne Coe: You've been advocating on this for years.

Ms. Linda Franklin: Yes.

Mr. Lorne Coe: What's your view of that?

Ms. Linda Franklin: I guess I would say that at the end of the day it's really up to the government whether they pay attention to the advice of their advisory councils. Because this is a growing area—it's not a new area, as you say, but it's certainly ballooning—I think there is value in an advisory council looking at this from a really clear perspective, with good folks around the table who know this.

The two things I would say: It's pretty big, so it will have to be well run or it will just be a whole bunch of voices at the table; and the second thing I would say is that it would be very helpful if there was the capacity for the advisory council to get good research so we're not just a whole bunch of people stating our opinions. But if there's a particular issue we want to address, it would be really helpful to have research behind it.

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): We'll move now to Ms. Sattler.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you very much for presenting on this bill and also your previous presentation on the predecessor to this bill. Your input is very helpful.

One of the things that you did not touch on was around the definition of work-integrated learning that's set out in the legislation. We heard from the first deputant this morning, from OUSA, that they saw this as valuable. We had also heard, on October 5, Dr. Gretchen Kerr, who did the recent study for HEQCO on comparing work-integrated learning programs across both colleges and universities and found that many of them did not meet the standard of what you would want, the criteria that you would want to see in a work-integrated learning program.

Do you think that the definition that is set out in this legislation is a good start? And what do you see as the benefit of having some kind of framework for what we define as work-integrated learning?

Ms. Linda Franklin: Sure. Yes, I think it is a good start and I think it is important to have some definition

around it. Again, as this area explodes, the capacity of colleges and universities to provide consistency and learning opportunities would be helped by a definition of work-integrated learning, so we're very comfortable with that. I think the definition is a good start, and I think it's important because even—again, you've seen in the past few weeks when we talk about this subject, many people go immediately to co-op. Well, co-op is not the only form of work-integrated learning, and so I think having some clarity around what exactly that can mean and the range of things it can mean will be important.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Okay. You talked a little bit about the contribution of the advisory council in moving the sector forward. Can you talk a little bit more about how you see colleges specifically benefiting from that?

Ms. Linda Franklin: Sure. We do this on a daily basis, but I think it's very helpful to have a group of people from different perspectives, all of whom are invested in this area, talking every now and then together about it because our experience and what we understand as happening on the ground may not necessarily match the experience of students from CFS or others, or may not necessarily match what employers are saying. We use this sort of structure ourselves in our program advisory committee so that we're sure that what we're doing is actually relevant and matches the needs and wants of the folks who need and use the service. I think that a council gives us a good opportunity to have that kind of conversation around this area routinely and in a structured way, and that's important.

1400

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): Great. Thank you very much. Ms. Wong?

Ms. Soo Wong: Linda, welcome back—and Jane; both of you. I want to go back to some of your remarks in your presentation about financial incentives. Which provinces in Canada have these financial incentives to encourage employers, especially small businesses, to do this? Are there any?

Ms. Linda Franklin: I don't know that any are really much further ahead than this particular bill right now. As I said, it's an emerging area of discussion. We would be leading.

Ms. Soo Wong: And other countries? Any countries that you're aware of?

Ms. Linda Franklin: Not that we're aware of.

Ms. Jane Holmes: No. At one point in time, there were some federal incentives to bring in students, but I believe those are no longer in place anymore, that they got lost.

Ms. Soo Wong: Because time is limited, I want to drill down on some of your website comments you just made earlier, Linda. You're asking in terms of the website—not more websites; just one website. What's your opinion of a government-run website? Would that add value? Instead of the multiple ones you talked about, one central one for the government to run this?

Ms. Linda Franklin: It seems to me that where you want to be is where students are. I'm not sure that it's intuitive for students to look to the government when they're looking for information for their education. For example, our application site, the Ontario College Application Service, gets about four million hits a year. Maybe that's a good place to embed something like this. Guidance counsellors go there for information. The same is true of the university website. That's where students tend to go as a first order of business to try to find out about their university or college experience, but I don't think it's either/or anymore.

We were just at a meeting with the folks from our application service yesterday. They can draw information from anywhere. I think what we are really trying to suggest is that we need to connect all of these things so that no matter what window a student goes to, they're getting the same information consistently about everything. In the same place they get information about OSAP, they can get information about experiential learning and they can get information about courses and programs.

It should be a one-stop shop. Guidance counsellors, students, their parents and teachers have to go to 15 different websites to get all the information students need to progress. That's not helpful to anyone, and most of these websites nobody has ever heard of.

Ms. Soo Wong: Okay. I've got time, right?

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): You do.

Ms. Soo Wong: Okay. The other thing I wanted to ask you is: In terms of responsibility for the training institutions and employers, what are your thoughts in terms of job descriptions and learning outcomes with respect to work-integrated learning opportunities? What are your views about having these be very prescriptive so that people know where they stand?

Ms. Linda Franklin: I think it's a good idea to have guidance for this sort of thing. We already do outcome measures for all of our programs, so we're awfully familiar with that. It would be awfully hard for us to object, to have outcome measures for experiential learning when those experiences are embedded in our programs. Outcome-based assessment I think is critical. The challenge is going to be: How do you enforce that across hundreds and hundreds of workplaces?

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): Sorry. That's all the time we have. Thank you very much for presenting today.

EDUCATION AT WORK ONTARIO

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): We'll now call Education at Work Ontario, EWO, to present. You have five minutes for your presentation. If you could state your name for Hansard, and questions will begin with the third party.

Ms. Elaine Fenner: Good afternoon. I'm Elaine Fenner, manager of career services and co-operative education at Seneca College.

Mr. Kirk Patterson: My name is Kirk Patterson. I'm a business developer with the University of Waterloo and current president of Education at Work Ontario.

Education at Work Ontario, known as EWO, strives to promote and foster co-operative education of the highest quality while facilitating positive partnerships between students, employers and post-secondary educational institutions. EWO represents professionals in Ontario colleges and universities who work with over 40,000-plus co-op students in Ontario in over 850 co-op programs across 37 institutions.

We're happy to be here today to speak to you on behalf of post-secondary co-operative education staff and management from Ontario's colleges and universities. This is definitely an important issue to all of us working in this field. Our group represents co-op, one of the many types of work-integrated learning currently active in our post-secondary institutions. EWO, in alignment with CAFCE—that's the Canadian Association for Co-operative Education, the national voice of co-operative education in Canada—follows their co-op definition.

Ms. Elaine Fenner: We had been speaking about definitions earlier.

"Co-operative education" is a program which alternates periods of academic study with periods of work experience in appropriate fields of business, industry, government, social services and the professions in accordance with the following criteria:

(1) Each work situation is developed and/or approved by the co-op education institution as a suitable learning situation.

(2) The co-op student is engaged in productive work rather than merely observing.

(3) The co-op student receives remuneration for the work performed.

(4) The co-op student's progress on the job is monitored by the co-operative educational institution.

(5) The co-op student's performance on the job is supervised and evaluated by the co-op employer.

(6) The time spent in periods of work experience amounts to at least 30% of the time spent in academic study.

This definition is used by the Ministry of Finance for the granting of the Co-operative Education Tax Credit to qualifying employers who hire post-secondary co-op students.

Our association advocates for quality, paid learning experiences in the workplace that benefit our students, industry partners and our post-secondary institutions. We are committed and eager to work with each other, along with government and employers, to provide a greater number of students the opportunity to graduate with meaningful, quality, paid work experience in their field of study. Working together is vital to increase the capacity of institutions and employers to provide quality co-op programming to more students.

To help us reach this goal, there are specific items in the bill that you may wish to amend or review.

Section 3.1(6) calls for representation from a number of organizations on the advisory council. EWO is currently not listed, and we would ask for an amendment to this and representation on the council.

This section of the bill also calls for a website to be created outlining all of the WIL programs in Ontario. Similarly to Colleges Ontario, there are current sites—and we ourselves have an EWO site—that contain much of this information. So we would request that work is done to expand the information in current sites, perhaps, rather than to develop a brand new site.

Mr. Kirk Patterson: EWO's presence on the advisory council will give this group data access that EWO will have through our Canadian association, which is opening up a brand new database later on this month, in order to conduct a current assessment of WIL and ongoing evaluation of the success of the mandate, i.e., increasing the number of paid opportunities or increasing them in certain sectors where there may be shortages of trained employees.

In closing, we would like to thank you for your interest and attention to this very important part of post-secondary education and for allowing EWO to comment on the proposed bill, Bill 64. We are pleased to answer any questions, if you have any.

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): Excellent. We'll move to Ms. Sattler first.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you very much for your presentation and for your suggestions about the bill.

I had a question about the definition of co-operative education. Co-operative education, compared to the other types of work-integrated learning, is very well defined, as you've pointed out. Yet, you still see some value in this minister's advisory council, even though co-op has been around for so long and there are all of these infrastructural places to assist with its implementation.

Can you tell us why you support the minister's advisory council even though you're focused already on the one type of WIL that is well developed?

Mr. Kirk Patterson: Co-op has been around since it started at Waterloo, and it has carried on since colleges and universities across Ontario have picked it up. The national definition has been used for a long time. The Ministry of Finance used it for their tax credit, as the key definition. However, today—and it has been stated to this committee before—the definition, unfortunately, gets battered around and mixed in with other types of work-integrated learning.

I think the advisory committee is beneficial. You'll have representation from the different forms of work-integrated learning. EWO sees a role in this because we're the ones that are working with co-operative education.

1410

If you look at myself, with 34 years in this field, I've been in the trenches, working. I think I know what co-operative education is. I think I have a good feel of what employers are looking for and what, certainly, our outcomes are for our students. We want the best for our

students in the learning experience. It's only through clear definitions of each type of work-integrated learning that some of this confusion can be eliminated, to the benefit of the partners—the government, the lawyers and the students—as well as the practitioners.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Okay, thank you. You mentioned the Co-operative Education Tax Credit. We had some discussion with the previous presenter about financial incentives for employers. Do you have any sense of what the uptake is of the Co-operative Education Tax Credit? Do most of the employers who hire co-op students actually use the tax credit?

Mr. Kirk Patterson: That's the one report I did not bring with me. I do know it's picked up; we do know it's beneficial. Our province is a leader in that. In fact, I've had calls from other regions of Canada asking why and how we did it, because they're looking at it.

I spoke at a government body in New Brunswick this past August, after attending the national co-op conference, and they were trying to figure out something similar to what we're doing here today: how to improve the quality of work-integrated learning.

The tax credit itself—I think more of the smaller companies will use it.

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): Sorry, we have to move now to the government, and Mr. Dhillon.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Post-secondary education and training institutions currently have individual websites and mechanisms for sharing information about work-integrated learning opportunities with students and learners. Do you think a government-run website would add value to the current infrastructure and practices?

Ms. Elaine Fenner: A government-run website for all students from various institutions to access?

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Yes.

Ms. Elaine Fenner: In my opinion, I think that likely has pros and cons. I think a warning with that would be that in the post-secondary institutions, we work very closely with employers and have developed particular relationships, and we have differentiations of programs. Sometimes it helps the employers to be able to know which institution to go directly to. So it may muddy the waters a bit more.

Mr. Kirk Patterson: I think if you have far too many websites, it will muddy the waters. The employers in Ontario work with the individual institutions in partnership. They go there for one reason or another. Those that aren't sure of where to go will google "co-ops." Sometimes they get sent to our website, and then we farm them to those institutions that they're trying to seek out.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: This summer, the Premier convened a highly skilled workforce expert panel to give us advice on how Ontario's workforce can prepare for a more technology- and knowledge-based economy. It was agreed that developing a highly skilled workforce is a shared responsibility, which is why our strategy is built on strong partnerships between employers and educators.

What do you think the responsibility should be of the training institution and the employer to develop job

descriptions and the learning outcomes for work-integrated learning opportunities?

Ms. Elaine Fenner: I would say that, obviously, the job description piece is filling a gap within the company. The employers are key in developing that, oftentimes in consultation with the educational institution they're recruiting from, so that the skill match can be made and we can ensure that student learning outcomes are being met while they're on the co-op work term.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: In general, do you feel that educational institutions have started to gear towards, say, companies that are in their jurisdiction to provide that specific skill set or that education for what they need?

Ms. Elaine Fenner: I think that happens in some areas or particular industries, such as mechatronics labs being developed to support the employment needs of particular organizations. But I think overall, we've got a number of academic programs that exist, and with—

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): Thank you very much. We have to move to the official opposition.

Mr. Coe.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you for your presentation and the work that you have been doing to help address the skills mismatch that exists in the province.

To begin, the bill defines work-integrated learning and establishes criteria—we'll just stay with the criteria part for a moment—to ensure quality workplace programs. Are you satisfied with the criteria that are described in the bill? If not, what would you add beyond what's there at the present time?

Mr. Kirk Patterson: Certainly, again, speaking from the co-operative education point of view, you're always going to have a bump in the road when it comes to work term development. The colleges and universities do, I think, a fantastic job of vetting employers, ensuring that there is a proper match, though allowing the students to realize there is competition. They're vying against other students for a job.

There may be issues. It's hard to say. I really believe that we're doing a good job. There are always going to be issues as to whether it's a match or not. As far as the other types of work-integrated learning are concerned, I think there is where we have to focus in on what we are looking for and what the outcomes are that we want out of this. I think there's some room for improvement.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you for your answer. Let's turn for a moment to communication. My colleague opposite asked a question about websites, consolidation and where it should be placed. It begs a larger discussion about communication; I think it goes beyond websites.

What advice would you provide, over and above what you have here in your presentation, which I agree with? Supplementary to that, what would you suggest for this committee to consider in terms of communication and engaging the partnerships that are described in schedule 1 of the bill?

Ms. Elaine Fenner: I think it's key that we need to get more industry participation. I think that is vital to ensure on the council—it does call for business participa-

tion, but to ensure that it's spanning the number of different industries and the different types of organizations, small, medium and large, all of the different types of employers who do hire our students so that their voices are heard.

Mr. Lorne Coe: All right. Thank you, Chair.

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): That's all? Great. Thank you very much for your presentation.

Ms. Elaine Fenner: Thank you.

CANADIAN FEDERATION OF STUDENTS OF ONTARIO

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): We'll now call upon the Canadian Federation of Students of Ontario. Good afternoon. You'll have five minutes for your presentation. If you could start with your name, please, for Hansard, and then questions will begin with the government after your presentation.

Mr. Rajean Hoilett: Hi, everyone. My name is Rajean. I am the chairperson of the Canadian Federation of Students of Ontario. The Canadian Federation of Students of Ontario represents around 350,000 students across the province, and we're really excited to be here today, to be able to speak to this bill and to be able to speak about work-integrated learning.

I'm also here as a social work student, as a student who has gone through work-integrated learning in a program that is really reliant on work-integrated learning. So a part of what I'm speaking here from is on behalf of my members, but also on behalf of my own personal experience as a student and as a worker.

As this conversation around work-integrated learning has continued to develop and continued to progress, both within the government but also within our institutions, students have paid really close attention to what these conversations have looked like—really keen on two main issues.

The first issue is around being paid for work-integrated learning and being paid for co-op and placement opportunities. We hear far too often from students, particularly the students who are living within the margins, the students coming from low-income backgrounds, who are finding it difficult to be able to take advantage of what we see as really valuable and effective opportunities to be able to expand our skills and complement our learning. Recognizing that for a lot of these work-integrated learning opportunities we're asking for folks to be taking on sometimes 20, 30 or 40 hours of unpaid work per week, the students who aren't able to do that are the students who are needing to be juggling two or three part-time jobs in order to pay for their education and be able to continue to get through school. We've consistently been concerned with this issue of unpaid internships, unpaid placements and unpaid co-ops as the norm and the direction that our education has taken.

The other really significant issue for students and youth is being afforded the same workplace protections

that workers are afforded while we're in these work-integrated learning opportunities.

1420

We hear far too often the horror stories, quite frankly, of students working in placements that are taken advantage of. It was just last year that the Toronto Star did an investigation on hospitality students working in hotels who were essentially just replacing the jobs of janitors and custodial staff. Those stories are far too common amongst students from all sectors who are going through placements in co-ops, but particularly sectors like social services or hospitality.

The focus in this bill on being able to extend Employment Standards Act protections to workers who are in co-ops or in placements is one that's really important for students and one that we really hope to see continue to take the front stage of this conversation as we're looking at developing a very valuable and a very important tool for students.

Thank you so much for affording me an opportunity to present to you today. I'll take any questions that folks might have.

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): Excellent. We'll move to the government and Mr. Anderson.

Mr. Granville Anderson: Hi, Mr. Hoilett. Thank you so much for being here today and for all you do for students throughout the province.

Mr. Rajean Hoilett: Thank you.

Mr. Granville Anderson: I guess, based on listening to you, you are supportive of some of the efforts the government is taking in this regard. I know you participated in the Changing Workplaces Review consultation. I think you did; is that right?

Mr. Rajean Hoilett: Yes.

Mr. Granville Anderson: That was wonderful. Could you tell us a bit more about your submissions, please?

Mr. Rajean Hoilett: Yes. A big focus in our submissions for the Changing Workplaces Review was on students who were working in precarious jobs. Between 70% and 90% of students are in some precarious job. Some of the main issues for students are around differential wages in those jobs; around unfair scheduling practices; and not being communicated our rights as workers in a lot of these jobs. We're seeing a lot of students being taken advantage of, both the students who are workers but particularly students who are engaging in these placements in co-ops.

Mr. Granville Anderson: Okay. Could you elaborate a little bit more on what changes you would like to see going forward?

Mr. Rajean Hoilett: Yes. Particularly, we think it's really important for the government and employers to communicate the rights as workers within the Employment Standards Act up front to students as they're entering these workplace opportunities. A lot of students are not very familiar with what their rights are under the Employment Standards Act, and we think that the government and employers should play a really proactive role in making our rights known.

We also think that these opportunities should be paid, and that that should be more proactively enforced, and that we should see more proactive enforcement across the board as it relates to internships and placements in co-ops. Oftentimes students don't report some of the injustices that they face in the workplace because of fear of reprisal and fear of being blacklisted within the industry that they're hoping to build their career in and that they're really just getting started in.

Mr. Granville Anderson: I have some more time, eh?

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): It's 30 seconds, 40 seconds.

Mr. Granville Anderson: Okay. As you know, the Premier convened an expert panel on a highly skilled workforce to give advice on how Ontario's workforce can prepare for more technology in a knowledge-based economy. Do you think this is a positive step forward? What advice would you give to the people shaping those programs and opportunities?

Mr. Rajean Hoilett: Yes. I think that's an amazing step forward. Primarily, what we really need to see in those opportunities is student engagement and student consultation in developing these partnerships with both business and our institutions and government. As a speaker before me said, being able to take direction from the students who are going through these programs is really important, so—

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): Thank you very much. We'll move to Mr. Bailey.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you, Rajean, for being here today and presenting.

We'll get right to the nub of the issue. Often, we've heard horror stories, anecdotally and from studies that people have come and presented on, about menial work, unpaid work and poor work experiences. Can you speak to that yourself, say, personally, or to some experiences of friends of yours who may have experienced some of those issues?

Mr. Rajean Hoilett: Yes. I shared the story of students who were at Humber College who were essentially replacing custodial staff. But even in professions like my own, in social work, we often see folks take on placements and, rather than learn about case management or learn about how to handle clients and how to do their jobs as social workers, folks are stuck doing the type of work that people don't want to be doing in those industries.

"Filing papers" is something that we hear from students far too often. When I was in my placement, that's the bulk of the type of work that I did. We see a lot of students not really sure as to where the value is in that. When you're just sitting there, filing papers away for an industry, you're not learning anything about what it takes to do the job. You're not learning anything about the company, but also not getting an opportunity to display your skills in hopes of being able to apply for employment with that employer down the line.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Do you see the provisions in the bill in schedule 1 or 2 as being sufficient, and do you see

them as being adequate to improve work-integrated learning?

Mr. Rajean Hoilett: Yes. I think this is a really good start and a really good foundation for the basis of the conversations that we're having, moving forward. Co-op has been around for a really long time, but we're now having the constructive conversations about how we fully integrate that into our learning and make sure that these opportunities are beneficial for students.

I think that the pieces in this bill around ensuring that these workers have the protections that they need, that these workers are paid for the work that they do, and that we're valuing the work that students are bringing to these industries and to these employers—as a basis and a foundation for the conversation, that is really important and something that we are really proud and excited to support.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Okay.

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): Mr. Coe?

Mr. Lorne Coe: I see that you're listed as a proposed member of the provincial advisory council. In the context of the terms of reference as they're described right now in the body of the legislation—the member beside me provided a segue—are you satisfied with the terms of reference, particularly from the point of view of engaging the business community, who do provide the co-ops? Are you satisfied with what's described at the present time? Or would you be offering some amendment in terms of how to best engage the people who provide the jobs?

Mr. Rajean Hoilett: I think that for us, initially, the terms of reference look really positive. We're really excited to see employers be part of the discussion and—

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): That's all the time we have from the official opposition. We'll move to Ms. Sattler now.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you very much for your advocacy on behalf of students and for your contributions to the development and, hopefully, the moving forward of this bill.

You talked initially about some of the barriers to students for to them to participate in work-integrated learning programs. You talked about juggling part-time work. Are there other barriers that you are aware of that may not facilitate a student entering a work-integrated learning program?

Mr. Rajean Hoilett: Yes. The main one we hear from a lot of our members is the piece around being paid for the work that they're doing. A lot of folks don't really have the opportunities to be able to take on that much work. It's really pulling away from people's ability to make money and to be able to save up and continue their degree and do things like pay rent and pay for food.

Some of the other things that we hear are that there are very few opportunities, especially within sectors like social services and hospitality. We don't really hear that a whole lot in sectors like engineering and in business opportunities. There are very few opportunities for students to take on that are exciting and that seem like something they would want to build their career around.

Being able to have more diverse opportunities, and also being able to see how the jobs or the placements that the students are going into will benefit their career, and knowing specifically what the things are that they'll be learning in those placements, is something that we hear very often as something that's very discouraging for students. Not knowing what it is that you're going to be learning in this job or not knowing what you're going to be doing day-to-day is something that has been very discouraging for a lot of students.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Okay. Certainly, one of the motivations for the bill was to help students enter the labour market after they graduate. You are likely aware of these studies that have been done in the US by the National Association of Colleges and Employers that show that unpaid work-integrated learning is exactly the same as no work-integrated learning in terms of entering the workforce. It's those paid work-integrated learning opportunities that really do give students a leg up. So I really appreciate your focus.

Can you comment a little bit about that? Has this been your experience, that the paid work-integrated learning is what is really valuable to get students into the workforce?

Mr. Rajean Hoilett: Yes. Paid work-integrated learning makes it so that there is an even playing field among people that are going to be accessing those learning opportunities but also will really help the students that largely don't have the work experience or don't have the things to be able to put on their resumé.

1430

We're talking about students from low- and middle-income backgrounds that will really benefit from being able to work and not feel like they need to take on multiple jobs to be able to finance their degree, which are often very precarious jobs that are not at all related to the things that they're studying. Being able to encourage people—

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): That's all the time. Thank you very much for your presentation today.

Mr. Rajean Hoilett: Thank you.

COLLEGE STUDENT ALLIANCE

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): We'll now call upon the College Student Alliance. You'll have five minutes for your presentation. If you could each state your name for Hansard, and then begin.

Ms. Samantha Joyce: My name is Samantha Joyce, and I'm the president of the St. Lawrence College Brockville campus student administrative council. I'm joined today by Ciara Byrne, CSA's director of advocacy.

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for allowing us to appear before you today.

CSA advocates for affordable, accessible, accountable, transferable and high-quality college education in Ontario. These pillars extend to supporting students as they transition into the workforce.

Evidence suggests that college students who participate in work-integrated learning have better labour market outcomes compared to students that did not. For example, from 2010 to 2014, over 60% of students that participated in work-integrated learning were employed in a related or partially related field of study, compared to over 45% of students that did not.

The college sector is a leader in the field of work-integrated learning, and as an organization, CSA embraces the opportunity to share the college's strengths and the experiences of Ontario's college students with the rest of the sector. We also recognize that this is a very opportune occasion to both identify and address gaps within our own work-integrated learning practices.

Bill 64 sets a positive direction for work-integrated learning and protecting those students participating in Ontario. We want to thank MPP Sattler for undertaking this bill. The principle of ensuring that each student in a program offering work-integrated learning is given an opportunity for an appropriate placement is important to a more equitable society.

As for the bill itself, we want to again thank Ms. Sattler for recognizing the importance of student representation on the Advisory Council on Work-Integrated Learning and to express that we look forward to doing our part to fulfill its mandate as a member.

Based on our members' feedback to the bill, there are some recommendations we would like to address for this committee when considering this bill.

Firstly, there is a piece in the bill that speaks to the recommendation of creating a website focused on work-integrated learning in Ontario. Currently there are many online outlets for students that we are required to visit, including the OSAP website to apply for loans; the National Student Loans Service Centre to pay back our loans; the Ontario College Application Service to apply for college; your institution's student portal to obtain class materials; and there are many more.

The online world is already cluttered for students, so there's a concern that creating another website will only add to that clutter, regardless of how valuable or pertinent that information is. We feel that having information regarding work-integrated learning opportunities, outcomes and programs available is important to share with students, but that information should be housed on the Ministry of Advanced Education website and college websites. The advisory council should determine which information should be collected and shared on the MAESD website.

The bill also states that the advisory council should create an annual report outlining the state of work-integrated learning in Ontario. While the council should advise MAESD on where the organizations are in regard to the state of work-integrated learning, ultimately it is MAESD and the government of Ontario's responsibility to publish an annual report on the state of work-integrated learning.

If we're going to work towards a system that provides each student with work-integrated learning opportunities

in post-secondary education, we also need to reconsider the practice of collecting co-op fees at institutions. Students should not be charged a fee for something that will be ingrained in the curriculum.

While CSA believes that students working in co-ops, placements and internships should be given the rights of an employee and treated fairly and given meaningful work that will enrich their educational experience, we will be doing our students a disservice today if we did not—

Interruption.

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): Sorry; just one second. We'll give you more time.

Please, if all members could keep their phones off, please.

Continue.

Ms. Samantha Joyce: Thank you.

We'd be doing our students a disservice today if we did not share their concern with Bill 64 with you. There is a fear that organizations, commonly not-for-profits—who are pleased to offer students who require placements a fulfilling position to help aid in their efforts—won't pay to hire students, as they simply cannot afford to, within those limited budgets.

Through Bill 64, the advisory council will be mandated to provide recommendations on regulation and oversight on unpaid work-integrated learning experiences as well as recommendations on reducing the proportion of work-integrated learning opportunities that are unpaid. These parts of the council mandate need to be a priority. Through building these strategies, we believe students' fears of not being able to partake in these enriching internships and placements will be eased.

Finally, better monitoring and reporting in the area of work-integrated learning in Ontario is key to making effective decisions and remaining responsive to the problem of youth employment.

CSA fully supports a comprehensive and transparent treatment plan of data relating to any education initiative in the province, and eagerly anticipates the findings. Based on what we've said, it's no surprise that CSA sees Bill 64 is an important step in enhancing not only the educational experience of students but also their employment after college. We also firmly believe that broadening the availability and accessibility of work-integrated learning opportunities will have a positive impact for those enterprises that participate and the province as a whole.

We look forward to this bill's speedy passage and to working with the advisory council on the next steps.

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): Excellent. Thank you very much. We'll move to the official opposition and Mr. Coe.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you very much for your presentation. It was excellent and covered both schedules of the bill, which certainly I welcome. I'd like to focus on schedule 1 of the bill because it's really at the heart of what I want to discuss here this afternoon at least. Are you satisfied with the directions of the bill as it presently directs the opportunities of experiential learning?

Ms. Ciara Byrne: Absolutely. We think schedule 1 outlines a clear definition of what work-integrated learning should be and should encompass. I think that's definitely needed in the sector as a whole. Being in committees and consultations, that has been something that's been brought up: there's no clear definition. I think Bill 64 does that. In terms of the mandate of the advisory council, the group that is listed to be proposed on that advisory council is quite extensive and very good and represents a lot of perspectives. The mandate: As we said, we would just like to see creating regulations and oversight of unpaid work and also strategies to limit or lessen the amount of unpaid work opportunities as a priority. But overall, we do support the mandate of that committee as well.

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'm pleased to see that your group is part of the proposed membership of the advisory council because it's students really, just out of my discussion and I'm sure my colleagues' discussions, who do have some of the conceptual solutions of how we can move forward and address the current skills mismatch that exists in the province.

Let's speak a little bit about those people who provide the jobs and the opportunities for co-ops and experiential learning and their input into developing academic programs that have an experiential learning component in them because there are still academic programs that don't, and you both realize that too. So going forward—and the backdrop is this proposed legislation, of course—how would you bring, in a more robust way, the business community to the table on this?

Ms. Ciara Byrne: How would we bring the business community to the table? I've had the pleasure of sitting with Colleges Ontario in big, large groups with industry partners. I already think they're very eager to be part of the discussion, so that's important, and I think it's important to have them at the table because there are skills they're seeing that our students might not be learning that they need to be taught within class too and within work-integrated learning opportunities. I think we would try to incorporate those with our membership in conversation with industry more individually with our membership so that it's not just on this council that we're talking to industry but we're also ingraining it in how we move forward as an organization.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you for that answer. Do you think financial incentives are required, out of your experience? I realize that employers are already at the table, but does it require financial incentives, in your estimation, to involve even more—

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): Mr. Coe; sorry. We have to move to Ms. Sattler now.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you very much for your presentation, and thank you also for the invitation to speak at your assembly last week about the bill.

One of the issues that came forward that I thought was very important was around international students. Many international students attend Ontario colleges. You represent them through the CSA. There was a discussion

about the need to ensure that there's some kind of acknowledgement or some kind of awareness perhaps of particular issues for international students.

1440

Can you talk a little bit more about that? Were you able to have a fuller discussion around international students' participation in work-integrated learning?

Ms. Ciara Byrne: Absolutely. It is ultimately harder for an international student to take part in co-op positions because of visas they need to obtain. It might take longer. They're sometimes only allowed to work on campus and not off campus, and there are not always co-op opportunities on campus. There's a barrier in the sense of where they are allowed to work and the process they have to go through to get their correct visas to do co-op. That's a concern for them, and how that could be mitigated—maybe the committee could work on providing recommendations to the federal organizations or training in those opportunities for international students to go through the process to obtain co-op, but ultimately it's important for them. They would jump at the chance to have an experiential learning opportunity because they know that will help them when they're graduated and that they've experienced working in Canada.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Right. One of the factors that led to the development of this bill was around these menial work placements that students reported having been in. Is this something that you have heard from the students you represent, that there is some inconsistency in terms of the quality of work-integrated learning that is available to students?

Ms. Samantha Joyce: I think there are situations where some of the placements that take place can include menial work. In my personal experience, I have had very enriching opportunities in placement. I'm in the social service work field and, despite some people experiencing the menial tasks of filing and paperwork, I believe it's a lot about relationship-building.

Everyone has to start at the bottom and work their way up, so it gives you that leg-up when you're joining the workforce as you've already been able to develop some experience at the bottom. Sometimes that's just about interacting with clients, just from my perspective, and sometimes it involves paperwork. That's all part of the learning process as well. Being able to manage paperwork is part of most jobs. So it really does depend on your placement, but having the proper faculty to connect you with placements that are effective and that are really beneficial to your learning experience is a very important part of the process as well.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): Great. Right on time. We'll move to Ms. Wong.

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you so much for coming. I just want to ask a couple of quick questions dealing with the Premier's and the Minister of Advanced Education and

Skills Development's approval of the expert panel report and the recommendations. I want to hear your comments dealing with the experiential learning opportunities. Specifically, what do you think about this recommendation that the Premier and the minister approved of, and what would you suggest in terms of improvement or shaping these programs and opportunities for post-secondary and high school students?

Ms. Ciara Byrne: Short answer: We love it. We were very happy to see the expert panel report come out. We had a great hand in being in those consultations and at those tables, and that panel was very good at listening to the student voice. When that did come out, we actually released an open letter to the Premier, making some comments on that expert panel report. Our main one was that we're very happy about the recommendation for everybody, including secondary and post-secondary students, to at least have one opportunity in experiential learning. There was a little talk about having students at the table in those discussions and on those committees that they're recommending and something that we truly support.

I know my colleagues at CFS Ontario just mentioned it as well. Student input, student feedback and student consultation on those different things are very, very important because they are the ones who are doing the learning and who are going out into the workforce with that. That's what our comment would be on the report.

Ms. Soo Wong: Now, I know that one of the previous witnesses today was Colleges Ontario. They spoke about the website issue. As students, can you comment on that piece with us? They said there are too many websites.

Ms. Ciara Byrne: We mentioned the same thing in our comments earlier. There are too many.

Ms. Soo Wong: So what do you suggest?

Ms. Ciara Byrne: We think that the advisory council could play a role in advising what information regarding work-integrated learning needs to be published, and that should be required to be published on program sites, so when you look at Conestoga College on the business administration program, you get all the information on work-integrated learning for that program and also the MAESD site, which is important. That should act as a hub for that information as well. But creating another website would fall to the wayside, and this is important information that shouldn't.

Ms. Soo Wong: Okay. Thank you very much for being here.

Ms. Ciara Byrne: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): No further questions? Great. Thank you very much for your presentation.

That ends public hearings on Bill 64. We'll leave it to the subcommittee to determine how the committee proceeds and what comes next. With that, the meeting is adjourned.

The committee adjourned at 1445.

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